



50 PHOTOS YOU SHOULD KNOW

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Brad Finger

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Front cover: Nelson Mandela at Osaka's Ogishima Park in Western Japan, October 28, 1990, see page 103

Frontispiece: Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge smile following their marriage at Westminster Abbey on April 29, 2011 in London, England.

Pages 10/11: West Berliners crowd in front of the Berlin Wall early November 11, 1989 as they watch East German border guards demolishing a section of the wall in order to open a new crossing point between East and West Berlin.

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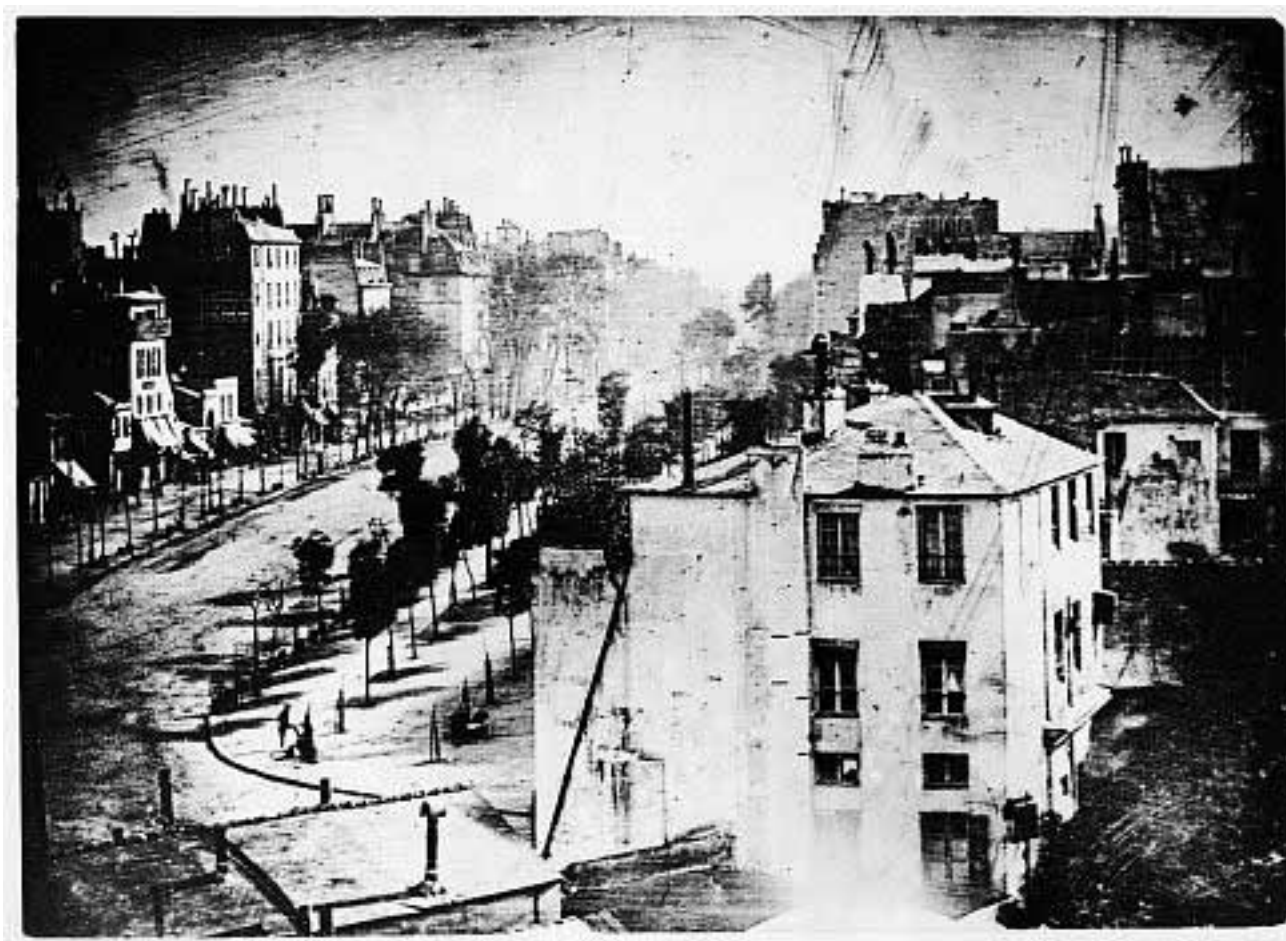


1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of The Social Contract, Or Principles of Political Right*

1773 Boston Tea Party

1789-99 French Revolution

1750 1755 1760 1765 1770 1775 1780 1785 1790 1795 1800



Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, View of the Boulevard du Temple, Paris, 1838

1804 Napoleon Bonaparte becomes French emperor

1808 Goethe, *Faust*

1821 Charles Baudelaire is born

1815 Napoleon defeated at Waterloo

1830 Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*

1848 French Revolution (February Revolution)

1855 Courbet's *Realism* exhibition

1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855

VIEW OF THE BOULEVARD DU TEMPLE, PARIS

Louis Daguerre may not have invented the photograph, but his innovations and flair for publicity helped make photography a worldwide phenomenon. Daguerre's lustrous images were the first photos to achieve widespread distribution, and they offered a new way for people to see the world.

Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787–1851) had spent his early life as an artist, showman, and theatrical designer. He helped develop the early nineteenth-century diorama. This traveling theater-in-the-round used highly detailed trompe-l'oeil paintings on linen—as well as clever backlighting—to make the audience believe they were viewing three-dimensional nature. But by the 1820s, Daguerre began experimenting with processes that could “reproduce” nature more quickly and effectively than his labor-intensive paintings.

Daguerre set up a partnership with Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, a wealthy inventor who had developed the technique of heliography, or “sun writing.” It involved coating a pewter plate with a sticky substance called bitumen of Judea. The plate was then placed in a camera obscura, which could project the image of an object or scene onto the plate. After letting the coated plate remain exposed to light for several hours, it was then removed and washed with a mixture involving lavender oil. Over time, the image that the camera obscura had projected onto the plate would appear in permanent, if rather hazy, form. For Daguerre, this must have seemed a magical process. The camera obscura had long been used by artists as a drawing aid. But now it could be harnessed to produce images that made nature and time stand still. Daguerre quickly set out to refine Niépce's sun writing technique. Soon he observed that by using different materials—copper plates coated with iodized silver—he could produce pictures of startling detail and richness. The diorama maker had found a new “canvas” on which his images could be captured.

Daguerre's first experiments with his technique were somewhat tentative. His earliest known photograph, *Still Life in Studio* (1837), has the look of a traditional painting. It

shows a carefully arranged group of plaster casts and other “artistic” objects, a scene reminiscent of seventeenth-century still lifes. But Daguerre would soon explore more extemporaneous shots. In early 1839, he pointed the camera out of his apartment window in Paris, over the busy Boulevard du Temple, and simply let the instrument photograph what it “saw.” The result was a cityscape rendered in unprecedented detail, yet eerily devoid of human activity. The image took several minutes to expose, making it impossible to capture the moving people and objects. But one individual did remain largely motionless during the exposure time, as he was getting his boots polished. His incomplete, shadowy form represents one of the first photographic “portraits.”

The year *View of the Boulevard du Temple, Paris* was created, Daguerre enlisted the help of François Arago to help publicize his invention. Arago was both a scientist and a shrewd politician, and he helped promote the “daguerreotype” process to the Académie des Sciences and the French government. When Daguerre's images were finally revealed to the public on August 16, 1839, they caused an immediate sensation. Almost overnight, daguerreotypists set up shop throughout Europe and North America. Framed daguerreotype family portraits began replacing the work of painters, forcing artists to rethink the purpose of painting itself. The “nonrealistic” experiments of Impressionism and later art movements owed their inspiration, in part, to the invention of Niépce and Daguerre.





1805 Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz

1826 First photograph by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce

1830 July Revolution in France

1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840



Henry Fox Talbot, The Open Door, April 1844